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CANADA AND THE EMPIRE



Speeches Delivered by
The Hon. SIR ARTHUR LAWLEY,
G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.



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[Ottawa, August 27, 1912]

CANADA AND THE EMPIRE

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THE HON. SIR ARTHUR LAWLEY, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN:

ON behalf of my fellow travellers I beg to express my best thanks to Sir Wilfrid Laurier for the charming manner in which he proposed this toast, and to you gentlemen for the generous reception which it was accorded at your hands. I understand that the majority of those sitting around this table are Canadian-born men whose homes and lives and honour are fast bound to their native soil. Many of them take a distinguished and honourable part (none more so than the proposer of this toast) in the wise and sagacious, and, I may add, the unfettered control of the destinies of Canada; and I esteem their presence here to-day as a great compliment to ourselves, and an indication that our visit is not unwelcome. I suppose that there is hardly a soul in the room who is less qualified than myself to speak of Canadian affairs from personal knowledge. My acquaintance is that of a few hours only, and it would be an impertinence if I were to hazard an expression of opinion, far less criticism, on Canadian conditions, whether physical, political, or economic. But this I can say, that there is not one of our party who does not rejoice to find himself in the Capital of Canada, not one who does not look forward eagerly to see for himself and to learn something of the illimitable resources of Canada—not through books and papers darkly but actually face to face. There is not one of us who does not share in your gratification in the prospects of an abundant harvest and your high hopes of greater prosperity in the years that are to come. I think we come in a season of happy omen.

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Only at the beginning of last month it was my privilege as a member of the Colonial Institute to welcome Mr. Borden on his arrival and hear his first speech in the heart of London. In simple yet stirring language he told us of the development of this country; of the great task undertaken by the two races—working hand in hand—and carried by them in the face of great difficulties to a magnificent consummation. He foreshadowed the marvellous possibilities of the future with the inevitable accretion of wealth unmeasured. He aroused our sympathies by the portrayal of the growth of national sentiment and patriotism in the hearts of the Canadian people, above all by the message which the Canadian nation has sent to the Motherland by the mouth of her chosen ministers. That message has stirred the heart of every Englishman, however insular, however unemotional and self-centred he might be. I venture to hope and believe that Mr. Borden and his colleagues when they have all returned will not have reason to complain of the welcome which it was our desire in the Old Country to extend to them. It was no perfunctory recognition of the official position which they hold, however distinguished it may be, and was no mere formal outward act of ceremony. It was the handgrip of kinsmen and fellow citizens of Empire, of comrades in the ranks of a mighty host, bearing aloft the banner of peace, progress and civilization to the remotest confines of the greatest Empire upon earth.

I am no disciple of blatant Imperialism, but I am not one of those to whom the word "Empire" sends a shiver down the back. As our generous host in his characteristically generous fashion has told you, it has been my privilege for the past sixteen years to serve my country in various capacities and various continents. In January last I left India, and after travelling leisurely through East Africa, Uganda, and South Africa, I found myself in London a few weeks ago, after over six years of absence. To-day my foot is on Canadian soil, so that this is the fourth continent in which I find myself within a year. I hope that I shall not seem to you arrogant if I claim to have some slight inkling, some dim appreciation, of the full significance

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of the word "Empire." Do you remember how Lord Rosebery speaks of it as

"An Empire built not by Saints or Angels, but by the work of men's hands, cemented with men's honest blood, and in a world of tears; not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with great and splendid purpose."

That is not I think a bad definition. And the best that I can wish for Canada is that her sons should have an even wider conception of the mission of Empire and an ever closer participation in its work. Just at present there is I know a disposition to consider the question of closer organic union only from the standpoint of external defence. And indeed it is not surprising if this should be so. I look at Europe and I see one vast armed camp. I see the greatest military power on the continent, which is at the same time the second greatest naval power of the world, straining every nerve, making every possible sacrifice to increase her efficiency as a fighting machine. And when I reflect that all this effort is being made for no ostensible reason or visible purpose, I find it incredible in spite of what has been said this afternoon by other speakers, to escape the conviction that at any moment England may find herself embarked in a struggle of colossal magnitude in which her very existence as a nation may be at stake.

I will not insult your intelligence by asking whether you have ever considered what a paralyzing effect upon Canada any continental war must be, however brief its duration and whatever its issue.

I look at Asia, and along the rim of the Eastern world I see millions and millions of dark twinkling eyes watching, watching—like molten masses within the crater of a vast volcano ready at any moment to pour forth in fire and frenzy and utter devastation. But with the manner of our kind, we heed it not. "The thing," we say, "is but a Yellow Phantom." It is so much more comfortable to prattle of the era of universal peace upon which we are about to enter. We flatter ourselves that mankind has shed his primitive instincts and thrown away his combative propensities as a snake sloughs its skin.

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We argue that in this twentieth century of civilization the day has gone by for the nations of Europe to submit questions of national honor to the arbitrament of the sword. But deep down in our own consciousness we know full well that the most potent factor for peace in the situation to-day is the British Navy. And paradoxical though it may seem, the more we augment its power as an engine of offence, the more do we increase its efficacy as an instrument for the maintenance of peace in the world. But I do not wish to dwell on questions of armaments and navies this afternoon. I would rather say a word as to other "great and splendid purposes of Empire."

If time allowed I would like to take you by the hand and canter with you through the great self-governing Dominions to show you how, working out their own salvation with no interference from the Mother Country, they are moving along different lines of policy in such matters as customs, naturalization, and, which is of far greater import, the treatment of the various native races within their borders, as well as the immigration of Asiatics and Indians. But this would take me far too long. And yet there is one matter in which I have been personally associated and of which I would like to say a few words, and that is the Government of India.

It is sometimes said that the Government of India and the adjustment of the relations between the East and West do not come within the purview of Canadian interests, but in this I cannot agree. To-day India is second in the matter of population and fifth in the matter of wealth amongst the nations of the world. And yet India is hardly a nation at all, but a great congeries of peoples of multitudinous races, creeds, and castes, differing widely in type, in language, in religion, and in degrees of civilization. We found India convulsed by incessant warfare, deluged by a ceaseless stream of anarchy, bloodshed, and crime; we have given her the benefits of universal peace. We found her people a prey to injustice, corruption and oppression; we have given them a pure judiciary, and justice between man and man. We have given them the ablest, most upright, the most devoted civil service that the world has ever seen. We have undertaken vast public works in the way of railways, and roads and systems of irrigation. By this latter we have

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saved millions of human lives, and to-day, thanks thereto and to a sagacious organization, we can fight famine as we could never fight it before. The land is dotted with hospitals and schools and all of what I may call the "plant" of higher civilization. In all ways we are seeking to restrain and push back the encroachment of ignorance and poverty, and disease, and sin, and to raise the people to a higher standard of life. During the past fifty years in spite of famine, plague, and cholera, and other ills to which oriental flesh is heir, the population has increased from 150,000,000 to 320,000,000, and that is one-fifth of the whole human race. It is a great work, and in only a less degree the same work is going on in Egypt, the Straits, East Africa, and other places. And the work must go on! We have put our hand to the plough and we cannot look back. If we were to withdraw from India to-morrow we should only fling her back into the welter of bloodshed and crime from which we rescued her long ago. It would be the betrayal of the noblest task which was ever committed to a people!

Apart too from any question of the abrogation of our moral duties to India, her loss would be a vital blow, for India is the strategic centre of the Indian and Pacific Oceans; and with her loss all the vast region over which we now hold sway, from the Mediterranean to New Zealand, and from Hong Kong to Capetown, must inevitably fall away.

And with that what would be Australia's fate? Australasia as no doubt you know, has an area equal to that of Europe, with a population which does not exceed that of London. She is surrounded by Asiatic nations with a population which is three times that of the whole of Europe. It is inevitable that with our loss of India, Australia would pass under the tenure of another race and our great dynasty would crumble into ashes. But we cannot abandon our work in India and the East. It is the "white man's burden" and the day, thank God, has not yet dawned when we may dare to lay it down! For it is a noble work, not unworthy of the best traditions of our race, and one in which no member of the Empire need disdain to take a share. Until only the other day England was bearing this burden quite alone. But if I do not read the signs of the times amiss, there has come into Canada with the sense of nationhood, a sense also of national responsibility. Over the Atlantic has

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gone forth the message to the Motherland from her children overseas, claiming their right to share in the burden of the Empire. And what will the answer be? Is it not written in the book of the Seven Seas?

"Look I have made you a place and opened wide the doors,
That you may talk together, your Barons and Councillors,
Wards of the outer march, Lords of the lower seas.
Ay' talk to your grey mother that bore you on her knees.
Also we will make promise. So long as the Blood endures
I shall know that your good is mine, ye shall feel that my
strength is yours,

In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,
That our House stands together and the pillars do not fall."

[Winnipeg, September 2, 1912]

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN:

I THANK you sincerely for the kind wishes conveyed in the toast which has just been so cordially received, and I assure you that we reciprocate those wishes most warmly.

We do well, methinks, to be here!

It is good to feel one's pulse stirred by the romping vitality of the Golden West and the magnetism of exuberant confidence which seem to permeate all things, even to impregnate the very air which one breathes. And good it is to see the treasures of nature's storehouse in this land which you are wisely exploiting with no little advantage to yourselves. I rejoice to see something of this wonderful Canada of yours of which you may justly be proud. And I think we do well to be here under the auspices of Mr. Arthur Grenfell. It is my privilege to count him amongst my oldest and best friends, and I may truly say of him that he is not only a stout-hearted Englishman but also a good Canadian. You will say that in the light of British Citizenship the one is a corollary of the other. I do not demur. But do not let us stop there. Some philosopher has said that he is the best citizen who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. Mr. Arthur Grenfell has done far more for the Dominion than this!

There are moments when the pride of race is strong in a man. And such a moment came to me last week when I stood in the power-house at the Soo and looked round on all the vast enterprise which is growing there under his hand. He has harnessed the elements; he has laid hold of the inert masses which lie hidden in nature's womb that he may mould them to the purposes of man. With courage and imagination he is leading a band of men possessing high intellectual and scientific attainments in the pursuance of a work which will not only find employment for many a man, and thus lay the foundation of many a Canadian home, but will also add greatly to the convenience, the progress and the wealth of the Canadian people. Thus he is proving himself a good Canadian; and I am sure I am only voicing the sentiments of all here when I express

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the fervent hope that his work may prosper abundantly and be carried to a triumphantly successful issue.

If I may strike a personal note I may say that I have been asked often why I have come to Canada. I have not formulated any precise answer yet; but my coming is no surprise to myself.

For some sixteen years I have been privileged to be a humble labourer in Australia, South Africa, and India, that the work of Empire might go on. That is work which seems to grip a man, and there have been times when I have wondered whether I was really more of an Englishman than an Australian or a South African, and it seems to me the most natural thing in the world that I should find myself in another integral part (and a very glorious part) of the Great Imperial Organization in which you and I are privileged to claim a Common Membership. I feel that this is not a strange land that I am in! That is no doubt due in great measure to the courtesy and consideration shown to us on all sides and the cordial and generous welcome which we have received. But at the same time I am all abroad in my endeavour to realize the vastness of all things about me—the scale on which nature has laid out her plans and carried out her designs; the scale on which man moves in his ideas and his works; the scale on which Canada is building herself up as a nation. Please do not think from this that I am about to embark on a dissertation on Canadian affairs. I refrain from any such impertinence!

But there are one or two matters of which I would like to speak which, if not of immediate concern to Canada, will, if I mistake not, be of no little interest to her before long.

Last May I found myself in London after many years absence with leisure to eat the bread of idleness and to take stock of my country and my countrymen.

I am startled at the changes on all sides. I am impressed with the restlessness of all classes. I am sensible that great social and industrial movements are astir. I am especially impressed by the wonderful evidence in all directions of the wealth of England—side by side, I know, with great poverty and widespread degradation of life—very awful but not I hope irremediable. If I dwell on the marvellous manifestation of wealth, on the amazing prosperity in trade and business of every kind—it is not in any boasting spirit, but because the enormous

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resources which England has at her command are an element of great strength to her in the Councils of the nations, and just now England has need to be strong. For when I look across the Straits of Dover, over that little silver streak which has meant so much to us as a nation—when I look at Europe, I see the marshalling of battalions—not in tens nor hundreds but in thousands—drilling marching and manoeuvring—I see a ceaseless and strenuous activity in every arsenal and dockyard—a prodigious expenditure of time and money and intellect on fleets and armaments. Is this a time, I ask myself, for us to lull ourselves to sleep with drowsy murmurs of a world-wide peace? Is this the moment for us to pretend that the throb of the war-drum and the thunder of the guns are but echoes of a dead past, and that the menace to our position as the leading naval power of the world is but a myth—a bogey to frighten children in the dark?

I can conceive of no more criminal folly, no greater dereliction of duty, than to lay such flattering unction to our souls. But if I discern the true temper of our people I need have no such fear. If I correctly gauge England's attitude of mind in the face of the momentous development in Europe it is this, that while she may accept as inevitable attempts to encroach on her commercial supremacy and the entry of rivals in the markets of the world, she is resolved to put beyond all doubt—so far as it lies within the power of human agency to predispose such issues—the question of her supremacy at sea.

England's temper to-day is that no challenge of her naval supremacy shall find her unprepared to meet it, that no sacrifice is too great, that no expenditure is too onerous, to secure the maintenance of her superiority at sea.—In no spirit of militarism, nor for any aggressive purpose, nor for any ambitious schemes of self aggrandisement, but for the fulfilment of the noblest mission of our Race, and that is for the maintenance of the Peace of the World. For this insurance England is able and willing to pay the full premium; and if need be she will pay it in the future as she has paid it in the past ungrudgingly, uncompainingly and alone. To my thinking there are compensations in the very incidence of the taxation. I deplore, as greatly as any man, the expenditure of millions yearly on the construction of battleships and other impedimenta of war which are in

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themselves economically unremunerative, but I believe that the material things of life are not all that God has revealed to man, and in the very sacrifice made I see a strengthening of the moral fibre of the nation. This, you may say, is a fantastic notion in which case I will point out that there is material satisfaction to be gained in contemplating the work which has been done in the past and is being done to-day by the Navy of Great Britain. Take Australia and New Zealand: In area they are equal to Europe, in population equal to London. These small communities have scattered themselves over a vast territory without any thought of molestation from without—free to build up their own institutions and inspire them with the spirit of extreme democracy. Felling their timber, winning their gold, shearing their sheep, sending their merchandise over every sea and into every port without any thought of menace or peril save those of wind and wave. In Northern Australia you have an enormous territory practically untouched and untraversed, a tropical region, which the white man has left alone, but one in which a brown or yellow race could live to the number of many millions and bring forth the fruits of the earth in abundance. But Australia has cried "Hands off," and no coloured race may dare to enter—not because of Australia's mandate but because behind Australia lie the ships of England's Navy. Round Australia are Asiatic nations numbering three times the population of Europe. Eliminate the Navy and how long think you would it be before Australia would have passed under the domination of an Eastern Race?

Only a decade ago our Navy enabled us to carry on a war in South Africa six thousand miles from our base in such fashion that the problem of transportation was comparatively easy of solution. To-day, in South Africa, we see two races—who were recently at one another's throats—working hand in hand and working successfully under the sheltering arm of England to carry their country to a degree of material prosperity hitherto undreamed of in that continent. In North America the mere existence of the British Navy has enabled you to concentrate all your thoughts, all your energies, all your talents on your own material development without any fears of external attack. Without any interference in the enjoyment of Canadian autonomy you have been free to build up your own institutions, to develop

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the resources with which you have been by nature lavishly endowed, to make your own commercial arrangements, and to dictate the terms on which members of other Races shall enter in and people this vast Dominion. Your growth as a nation has been rapid, vigorous and robust. But it has been hitherto a sheltered growth. Now has come the quickening of a national spirit—a sense of national self respect and desire to assume national responsibility, and heartily do I rejoice thereat not only that Canada may share in our naval policy but also in those questions of policy—many of them of great gravity—which are common to all the self-governing Dominions. I will touch on one only and that is the adjustment of the relations between East and West between the white and coloured Races, which is a question in world politics coming very rapidly to the front. You have laid down your own policy regarding Asiatic immigration and spoken with no uncertain voice. Australia has declared for an absolutely white Australia. In the Straits Settlements you find a heterogeneous population, including a large and rapidly growing number of Chinese all free to come and go as they please. In East Africa white settlers are coming in to find a great number of different indigenous tribes established in huge native locations, and in the coastal territories a mixed breed in which the Arab type is general, and on top of all this a practically unlimited flow of Indians all over the country right up to the border of the Congo. In South Africa again you have an enormous negro population in all degrees of civilization—some in some parts enjoying the franchise and rights of citizenship, some in other parts excluded therefrom entirely—in one region you find Indian labour eagerly sought for and encouraged, in another region resolutely forbidden and the colour bar insisted on with a vindictiveness almost amounting to persecution. Then there is India herself keenly alive to the ignominy with which Indians (though accredited in England and India with full rights of citizenship) are subjected in the self-governing Dominions—full of bitter resentment and indignant protest against the humiliation to which they are submitted merely because they are Indians.

Hasn't the time come for some co-ordination of policy? for the statesmen in the various Dominions and dependencies and colonies who have had to tackle the problem on the spot to

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come together and devise some logical and uniform line of action which shall not be in conflict with local sentiment and yet not add unnecessarily to the difficulties of the Government of India? For India is the linch pin of the Imperial coach. Remove it and our Eastern Empire would founder and lie helpless and derelict at the mercy of our foes. If you doubt it take the map! It needs no military expert to point out to you that India is the strategic centre of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and that if England is to remain an Empire at all she must hold India with her latest breath. But it is not for strategical reasons alone that we must remain in India.

There is to my thinking no task to which a man can put his hand more noble than that of administration, and of all the pages on which are inscribed the records of our history none are brighter than those whereon is writ the story of British Rule in India. It has been made recently the subject of hostile criticism but these are days of disparagement when our every act is subjected to intense scrutiny under the strongest microscope. But put down the microscope and stand back from the canvas and you will see a picture good to look on.

Travel through India and as you move northward you will find the country scarred with ruins—vast cities standing broken and shattered and rent in pieces; shreds of palaces and temples; wrecks of ancient dynasties, which have been brought to their knees by powers mightier than they and humbled to the dust. There they stand and have stood, some a hundred, some a thousand years, milestones on the down road which the centuries have passed, all telling the same story of the storm track of war, with all its hideous accessories of bloodshed and devastation; of rapine and lust and crime. To-day from the snow-clad ranges of the Himalayas to the sweltering reaches of the Coromandel Coast the land is wrapt in universal Peace. The pages of Indian history in the past are one dreary record of corruption, dishonesty and intrigue of oppression and injustice; the tyranny of the strong against the weak. To-day between all races and sects and creeds the scales are held evenly and equally for all, and slowly British standards of truth and justice and honor are coming to prevail. By roads and railways and irrigation; by hospitals and schools; and by all the impedimenta of a christian civilization we are fighting the ogres of famine and plague, of

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ignorance and sin, so that in fifty years the population has increased from 150 to 320 millions of people—one fifth of the whole human race—and for them slowly but surely the standard of life is being raised.

For India's sake the work must go on. We cannot abandon India and leave her defenceless against herself to fall back into the slough of despond from which long ago we helped her to emerge. No less is this the case in Egypt and our other Eastern dependencies. The cause of humanity calls us forward and we cannot go back without humiliation and disgrace. Such an eventuality is unthinkable.

I spoke just now of the quickening of the Canadian national spirit which has found expression in your claim to share with the Motherland not only in her naval policy but also in the guidance and control of those events which lead up to decisions of peace or war. Soon I hope it will be yours to claim a fuller participation in such work of empire as that of which I have tried to give some faint outline to-night. It may mean some demand on your labour, some renunciation of material advantage, some subordination of self, whether of the state or of the individual, but the cause is not an ignoble one, the goal is worth the winning! And the reward? Shall we not find it in the thought that we have played some little part in bringing the humbler denizens of Empire, the downcast and degraded, the hapless, helpless victims of barbarism and injustice and wrong, to the conception of a higher civilization? Shall we not find it in the thought that we have done some little thing to weld more closely the bonds of British citizenship, and thus strengthen the bulwarks of our Empire?

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